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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Initial and second periodic reports of States parties

BELIZE

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Government of Belize submits its initial report to the United Nations Secretary-General to comply with the obligations of the country as a signatory of, and therefore a State party to, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on March 1990.

2. The present report provides a summary of current constitutional, legislative and administrative measures taken in Belize, and the programmes established since the ratification of the Convention.

3. Part I contains general information on Belize, a brief account of milestones in addressing women's issues, the administrative and legal bodies available to the State to enforce the articles of the Convention, and a description of the context in which this initial report is presented to the United Nations Secretariat.

4. The report is cognizant of institutional voids that served to delay the country's response to its commitments as a State party to the Convention. However, the effort to document the situation of women and to analyse legal concerns in the framework of the Convention, has been a useful exercise in self-assessment to promote the required changes.

5. A different problem stems from the fact that social indicators as they relate to the status of the articles of the Convention are difficult to obtain. In some cases, specific sectors of the State have not yet built the capacity to document gender differences and obstacles to achieve equality. In others, processes are under way. Consequently, the report draws information from several written sources, or otherwise relies on knowledgeable informants.

6. The situation of women in the country was jointly reviewed by governmental and non-governmental organizations for the preparation of the country document for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in 1995. The present report draws extensively on the findings and recommendations of that country document, as well as on the legal assessment undertaken by the governmental body responsible for overseeing compliance with the Convention.

7. Part II deals in detail with each of the articles of the Convention (except for the articles of part V, which deal with United Nations rather than national government roles), and provides statistical information when available.

8. The report describes legal acts in the process of revision, and estimates the impact of such legislative changes. For each article, the report stresses difficulties in addressing the rights of women in the country, at both cultural and institutional levels. In so doing, the report suggests moving from de jure to de facto equality so that the work of Belizean institutions and the society at large will be to fulfil their obligations by amending legislation and recognizing the fundamental freedoms so that women's rights are ensured. The range of actions advocated include purposeful legislative reform, policy formulation and budgetary allocations for implementation, reform of institutional gendered practices, and public education and awareness.

PART I

1. Brief overview of the country

9. Belize achieved independence from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1981. A democratic country situated on the eastern (Caribbean) seaboard of the Central American isthmus, Belize is bordered to the north by Mexico and to the south and west by Guatemala. The total land area is 8,867 square miles (22,700 square km). A 132-mile (220 km) coral barrier reef on the coastal line constitutes a major tourist attraction. Some 93 per cent of the country is still classified as forest. Of the total 5.7 million acres of available land area, 2.2 million acres (39 per cent) is suitable for agriculture but only 15 per cent is currently under cultivation. The climate is subtropical. The country lies in the path of the Atlantic hurricane belt, with Hurricane Hattie in 1961 causing extensive damage in the former capital, Belize City. Since then, the new capital of Belmopan has been erected inland.

10. The country is a sovereign State modelled on the parliamentary democracy of the British Westminster system. The head of State is Queen Elizabeth II, represented by a Belizean, the Governor-General, who for the first 12 years of independence was a woman. A new Governor-General was appointed in 1993. The executive branch is made up of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. An elected 29-member House of Representatives and an appointed eight-member Senate constitute the legislature, the National Assembly. The Governor-General appoints members of Cabinet - ministers and ministers of State - on the advice of the Prime Minister, usually the leader of the majority party in the House of Representatives. Elections are held every five years.

11. An elected City Council for Belize City and seven elected town boards constitute Belize's local government. In rural areas, Village Councils manage community services and local affairs. Administratively, the country is divided into six districts: Belize, Cayo, Corozal, Orange Walk, Stann Creek and Toledo..

12. Belize is a member of the United Nations, the British Commonwealth, the Organization of American States, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and attends Central American heads of Government meetings.

2. Population trends

13. The 1991 census report (Central Statistical Office, 1992) estimated a population of approximately 200,000 persons, with an average population density of 8 per square km. There is a male:female ratio of 0.966, except for Belize City, the largest urban centre, where females outnumbered males. Almost a quarter of the population (23 per cent) live in this centre, and 47.5 per cent of the population occupy urban areas, of which 50.7 per cent are female. About one quarter of the population live in rural communities with fewer than 200 inhabitants.

14. During the past decade, refugees from neighbouring countries have migrated to Belize. At present, the best estimate of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is 29,000 immigrants, about 14 per cent of the total population. In recent years, an urban to rural trend of

52 per cent to 48 per cent has been observed, in contrast to general trends in the developing world.

15. A high natural growth rate, estimated at 2.9 per cent per annum, and immigration is offset by the flow of young and educated Belizeans to North America. A specialist from the University of the West Indies (UWI) calculates that as many as one out of eight primarily young and educated Belizean residents emigrated during the past 10 years.

16. The age composition is as follows: 64 per cent of the population is under 25 years of age, of whom 44 per cent is under 15 years. However, between 1980 and 1991, the percentage of the population aged under 15 years decreased from 45.7 per cent to 43.9 per cent (1.8 percentage point), and for those 65 years or older decreased from 5.0 per cent to 4.2 per cent.

17. Other significant population data show a decline in the total fertility rate from 7 in 1960 to 4.6 in 1991. Yet, this figure is higher than in other countries in the Caribbean. Almost 19 per cent of the "everborns" are of mothers under 20 years, but statistics from the Ministry of Health indicate 32 per cent in 1990.

18. Twenty-two per cent of households are headed by women. Despite the nearly 50 per cent expansion of the job market over the past decade, women represent only 8 per cent of the total labour force and experience 25 per cent average unemployment. Government remains the major employer.

19. UNHCR also reports that about 20 per cent of refugees are single female-headed households, with 11 per cent being headed by widows and 9 per cent by single women. It is estimated that these rates may be even higher for the 16,000 undocumented residents. The great majority of refugees live in families. Literacy rates among refugee women are estimated at 40 per cent.

20. The major source of programme funds for refugees and displaced persons has been the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA).

21. Common-law marriages are prevalent as are the "visiting" relationships found in other parts of the Caribbean. The majority of children are born out of wedlock (59 per cent in 1990), which does not necessarily mean being born into an unstable union.

22. Belize is a multi-ethnic country. At present, the Mestizo (Spanish/Amerindian) population, at 43.6 per cent, comprises the largest ethnic group, followed by the previous dominant Creole (European-African descent) population, at 29.8 per cent. These figures are surely the result of the above-mentioned demographic phenomena. Other groupings are the Garinagu (black Caribs), 6.6 per cent, the Mayan Indians (Mopan and Ketchi), 11 per cent, and the Mennonites (German-Speaking Anabaptists), 3.1 per cent. Other small ethnic groups include East Indians, Chinese and Lebanese. English is the official language - with 77 per cent reporting fluency, and 44 per cent reporting fluency in Spanish. In addition, other languages - Mopan Mayan, Ketchi, Garifuna and German - are spoken in regional clusters. Although there are no official records, Belizean Creole, a version of English in which some constructions and

words are African (Bolland, 1986) is the vernacular language and the means of cultural expression by most Belizeans. At present, it is recognized that Belize Creole fulfils its socio-linguistic role in satisfying the everyday (informal) communication needs of its speakers (Troy, 1991).

23. The Human Development Report, 1994[1] situates Belize in the "medium group", ranking eighty-eighth out of a total of 173 countries.

3. Economic situation

24. Belize's economy is relatively stable. The country's main exports are sugar, citrus, bananas, fish products, timber and garments. In recent years, there has been significant growth in the construction and tourism industries. Annual per capita income in 1993 was estimated to be US$ 2,224 (gross domestic product (GDP) base). Inflation has been pegged at a relatively low level (averaging 5 per cent since 1985). Belize currency (Belize dollar) is stable, with a fixed exchange rate against the United States dollar of BZ$ 2: US$ 1.

25. During the period 1985-1989, structural adjustment measures led the economy in order to maximize the gross national products (GNP). The result was an outstanding growth rate of 10.9 per cent over the period 1987-1990. Yet, this achievement did not reflect on the social sector. The failure of the "trickle-down" approach to development produced imbalances in income distribution, employment opportunities, investment in public services, and the provision of incentives to community enterprises. It is estimated from the 1991 census that 38,000 people, 20 per cent of the total population, fall below a World Bank poverty threshold of annual income of less than $740.

26. A 1994 poverty profile of Belize indicates that approximately 23 per cent of the population are poor and 7 per cent are extremely poor. The difference in female and male heads of households below the poverty line was not significant at the national level. However, in some districts there were some small differences.

4. Signing of and compliance with the Convention

27. In March 1990, Belize officially signed the Convention.

28. The Government ratified the Convention, making it law, with the commitment that the 30 articles would be complied with by all spheres of Belizean society. Specifically, by the time the Convention was signed, the Government engaged in a series of acts that placed emphasis on integrating women into the development process. Specifically, the Government's Development Plan for 1990-1994 acknowledges the threefold roles of women as producers, reproducers and community managers. It stresses the need for social sector programmes to achieve real social equity, with particular attention being directed towards women and youth, and giving particular attention to the special needs of women in the areas of health, skills training, legal protection and employment conditions.

29. Ratification of the Convention was preceded by Government Plans reinforced an approach to gender-based development, and the continuation of social

practices assigning women a sole role in the subsistence economy and the domestic realm. These included the Development Plan for 1964-1970, which following a United Nations mission (1962/63), advocated an entire reorientation of education away from a distinctly literary bias to focus on agricultural skills. The only reference to women was in the teaching of sewing and home management to girls, and the provision of midwives and maternity beds. In the Development Plan for 1977-1979, the only reference to women was support for women's associations to develop domestic skills, and construction of an institution for young girls.

30. Thus, women's rights started to be addressed quite recently, despite the fact that women were active in expressing their interests as far back as in the 1950-1960 period during the nation's impetus to acquire independence (Macpherson, 1993). Moreover, the legacy of welfarism common to Caribbean countries retarded legal and structural interest to implement the Convention.

31. The legal and social framework to implement the articles of the Convention is the Belize National Constitution (as updated to September 1990).

32. The institutions and/or authorities responsible for compliance with the principle of equality of men and women are all sectors and social institutions under the domain of the Constitution.

33. The legal instruments that could be used by women when subject to any kind of discrimination are:

(a) Equal rights. No legislation, but embraced in the Constitution;

(b) Citizenship. No legislation, but covered in the Constitution;

(c) The Family Legislation Amendment Act, passed in June 1994;

(d) The Domestic Violence Act, passed in March 1993.

34. Additionally, the jurisdictional function of these legal instruments is effected through the following courts:

(a) The Supreme Court of Judicature (94), or Supreme Court, whose members are the Chief Justice and such number of other justices as prescribed by the National Assembly (95, 2). The Chief Justice is appointed by the Governor-General, following advice of the Prime Minister after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition (97, 1). Justices are appointed by the Governor-General acting in accordance with the advice of the Judicial and Legal Services Section of the Public Services Commission and with the concurrence of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition (97, 2).

(b) The Court of Appeals, with jurisdiction and powers to hear and determine appeals in civil and criminal matters conferred by the Constitution or any other law (100, 1). The members ("Justices of Appeal") are appointed by the Governor-General, with advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition (101, 1).

(c) The Public Service Commission, composed of a Chairperson and 18 other members, appointed by the Governor-General in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister given after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition (105, 1.2).

(d) The Family Court, institutionalized by the Laws of Belize, in force on 30 June 1990, on chapter 83A. It has jurisdiction throughout Belize (3, a), and a District Family Court in each judicial district (3, b). Accordingly, Magistrates are appointed by the Public Services Commission (A, 5), as well as its officers, bailiffs, employees, counsellors and social workers (A, 7). Judges are appointed by the Governor-General, acting in accordance with the advice of the Judicial and Legal Services Section of the Public Services Commission (4, 1).

5. Legal and public system

35. The legal and public system is founded on the principles set by the Belize Constitution. It aims to protect and safeguard the unity, freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize.

36. The National Assembly is constitutionally entitled to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Belize (68, 1), with consent by the Governor-General (81, 3). Once consented, laws become "acts" (81, 5).

37. In Belize, women and men who have attained the age of 18 years have had the right to vote (92, a) since 1954.

38. Belize is divided into 29 electoral divisions (89, 1).

6. Religion

39. The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights of individuals with regard to freedom of conscience, of expression and of assembly and association (3, b). While it does not directly address women, using gender-sensitive language, it manifests that a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of conscience, including freedom of thought and religion, freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others, and both in public and private to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance (11, 1).

40. According to census data, Christianity is the predominant religion. The breakdown is as follows: 57.7 per cent listed as Roman Catholic, 6.9 per cent Anglican, 6.3 per cent Pentecostal, 4.2 per cent Methodist and 4.1 per cent Adventist. Other denominations include Baptist, Mormon and Jehovah's Witnesses, and other religions include Baha'i, Muslim and Hindu.

7. Governmental and non-governmental agencies to promote the advancement of women

41. Key government-based agencies include:

Department of Women's Affairs (DWA)

National Women's Commission (NWC) (appointed/advisory)

Health Education and Community Participation Bureau (HECOPAB)

National Social and Economic Advisory Council (NASEC) (coordinating/advisory)

42. Key non-governmental agencies include:

Association of National Development Agencies (ANDA) (coordinating non-governmental organization)

Belize Association of Technical and Professional Scholars (BATAPS)

Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology (BEST)

Belize Family Life Association (BFLA)

Belize Organization for Women and Development (BOWAND)

Belize Red Cross Society

Belize Rural Women's Association (BRWA)

Belize Women against Violence (WAV)

Breast Is Best League (BIB)

Council for Voluntary Social Service (CVSS) (coordinating non-governmental organization)

Help for Progress

Parent Resource Institute for Drug Education, Belize (PRIDE)

Society for the Promotion of Education and Research (SPEAR)

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

PART II

43. In order to assess appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, the provisions made by the Constitution of Belize for the purpose of guaranteeing women the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men are discussed below. The gender-biased language has been maintained in the understanding that reforms should accentuate equality of both sexes.

Article 1

> For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on

the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

44. In Belize there are no acts that specifically define discrimination against women. However, since the country is a signatory party of the Convention, the country accepts its legal commitment to end any form of discrimination against women owing to gender.

45. The Constitution spells out that the expression "discriminatory" means:

"affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by sex, race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description" (16, 3).

46. Therefore,

"no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person or authority" (16, 2).

Article 2

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

(a) To embody the principle of equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;

(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;

(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 3

States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

47. The Constitution of Belize explicitly states that the people of Belize

"require policies of state which protect and safeguard the unity, freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Belize; which eliminate economic and social privilege and disparity among the citizens of Belize whether by race, colour, creed, or sex" (p. 2-3).

48. In its chapter II, on the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, the Constitution assures that

"every person in Belize is entitled to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, that is to say, the right, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex, but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest, to each and all of the following, namely -

"(a) life, liberty, security of the person, and the protection of the law ..." (3).

Article 4

1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.

49. Equality between women and men is guaranteed by the Belize Constitution, which states that

"All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law" (6, 1).

50. In general, special temporary measures have not been adopted to ensure that this provision is given effect. In education, young women secure just over half of the available places in secondary schools, by virtue of selection being based on academic merit. Women continue to be under-represented in employment, especially skilled and professional positions more likely to deliver income equality. In opening the second session of the seventh National Assembly, in 1994, the Governor General foreshadowed the introduction of legislation to provide for equal pay for work of equal value. Special provisions exist with respect to such areas as maternity leave (refer to discussion under article 11). To date, the Government of Belize has not considered the potential need for affirmative action provisions to give better effect to this article, especially in relation to achieving improved gender equality in the labour force.

Article 5

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures:

(a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;

(b) To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.

51. The gendered nature of social relations operate at various levels, regardless of ethnic race or status background of women in Belize. The gender expectations underlying the conviction that men are superior to women contrast with the renowned capacities and contributions of women of Belize in the domestic, community and work places. A historical glance at the processes that had reinforced cultural and gender stereotypes help to understand the rooted prejudices against women in the country, while adding to the identification of obstacles in the country to eliminate practices that reinforce inequality.

52. Historically, both the gender division of labour during colonialism and the movement towards independence during the 1950s and the 1960s assigned and commended the roles of wife-housewife-mother, a good citizen, faithful, loyal and strong, but subordinate to a familial male head (Macpherson, 1993). As mentioned before, among the diversity of ethnicities and the distinctive cultural differences, the pattern of unequal relations between women and men is consistently found throughout the country.

53. For most of the country, labour during colonial times was organized around woodcutting. Since men were required to work from one logwood area to another, there were no strong ties between women and men to develop the kind of nuclear-patriarchal structure of most of the western societies. Thus, the structure of a female-headed household emerged as an adaptive response to slavery, as well as cultural models, including the centrality of the mother-child and sibling bonds; the importance ascribed to the role of mother in contrast to the role of wife,

and exogamous tendencies in the selection of conjugal partners (Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow, 1981).

54. For the majority of urban Creole women, the stereotype of the "bembe woman" shaped their female identity and the social system of gender expectation. The bembes were the Creole street vendors, market women, domestics, washerwomen and shoppers who engaged in liberationist movements and performed a quasi-public caretaker role. "They were not afraid to fight or curse or swear ... They would fight, they were abusive."[2] However, in the process of nation-building, women entered into the state machinery performing gender-biased occupations, yet, with a sentiment of worth instilled by the nationalist discourse, praising their role as the "backbone" in the struggle against the colonial Powers.

55. On the other hand, the majority of women in the rural/northern region, Corozal and Orange Walk, are descendants of Yucatecan Mayan Mestizo people and of earlier Mayan populations. In the southern area of Toledo there are also Mayan populations (Ketchi, Mopan). In the northern area, colonialism was mediated by the economic and cultural system based on milpa farming and subsistence agriculture. According to Burns (1983), the milpa is a symbol of Mayan identity. Corn farming is not a mere commercial activity for Mayan people but is a way of life based on sacred and fulfilling tradition (Burns, 1983). Both men and women were in some way involved in the cash economy, and some tasks were also shared by both sexes: for example, gathering firewood and shelling corn (Henderson, 1993). However, the introduction of commercial sugar cane production in the early 1960s brought changes to the way women and men have organized their own spheres of influence. As men became commercial farmers or seasonal workers in the zafra their activities evolved around cooperatives and production, beyond the kin group. Yet, for women, dependence on the generation of income by the male "breadwinner" reinforced the assigned household role in the domestic realm and male authority. At present, few women from this region are entrepreneurs.

56. Women in the south, Garinagu or descendants of Afro-Amerindians, find work primarily in the manual labour and service sector but the labour market is occupationally segregated, and men work in a wider range of industries and fill a greater number of occupations (Kerns, 1983).

57. This brief account shows how the division of labour reinforces dependency on the part of women. The way the process of socialization augments gender role differentiation could also be analysed. In the case of urban Creole women, Lundgren (1987) asserts:

> "Gender roles are clearly defined and not questioned within the context of everyday life; ... children can be beaten for playing with the wrong kind of toy if the opportunity ever arose".

58. In rural areas, McClaurin (1993) found that the gendered categories of boys and girls appear to be more fluid and can shift according to age and circumstances. Young boys can assist in food preparation, laundry and general house cleaning, but, she asserts, "Rarely did I observe examples of girls permitted to do so-called boy's work, so that this flexibility appears to be one-sided".

59. Belizean society assigns a strong value to mothering. This might be explained by the above-mentioned nationalist discourse, as well as by the endurance of consensual unions and the high rate of teen-age pregnancy, leaving women fully responsible for the welfare of their children. Thus, it is likely that women prefer to see themselves as mothers, more than as wives.

60. Responsibility for the totality of the household is also expressed in the category "home duties" used by the latest census (1991) as the primary work. Thus, 64 per cent of women, as compared to only 4.4 per cent men, identified "home duties" as their primary "economic activity".

61. Within this context, even though women in Belize deal with economic and social pressures to contribute to the economy and social growth, gender idealogies are likely to explain the lack of support that different segments of Belizean society give to women regardless of their class, status, ethnic background or level of education.

62. Some programmes in the country attempt to address existing gender ideologies. The Department of Women's Affairs devotes most of its programmes to network with existing social and educational institutions for provision of gender awareness education. The Ministry of Education, DWA and the Society for the Promotion of Education and Research conducted a study on gender stereotyping in textbooks (UNICEF, 1992): a research study involving teachers from Teacher's College in Belize City. DWA and SPEAR continue to work on gender awareness workshops, with the objective of reaching as many audiences as possible.

63. An important strategy is to provide education on gender issues to community workers and people working in social sectors. Through the Community Certificate Training Programme, the University of West Indies' Extramural Department and DWA have included gender-sensitive content to foster understanding of gender differences. DWA includes in the country-wide Female Young Training Programme discussion on role differentiation, gender expectations and the importance of entering into non-traditional careers.

64. A study undertaken by DWA under the auspices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (DWA and others, 1993) looked at gender ideologies among young adults in Belize City. It aimed at identifying factors that contribute to specific situations confronted by young people in Belize urban centres, such as teenage pregnancy rates, high drop-out rates from school, and emigration, among others, but also explored their own perceptions regarding the condition of being a man or a woman. The results show that there were no significant differences between men and women in their agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

Men and women get the same amount of money for the same kind of job;

It is preferable that women look after the family;

I believe that, given the right conditions, I will succeed;

Only with my own efforts will I succeed.

Yet, women did not agree with the following statements:

> Women with education and skills can get the same high-paid jobs as men;
>
> It does not matter whether you get an education or not, as long as you have a way of making money.

Men, on the other hand, showed a higher percentage of disagreement with this statement:

> Women cannot earn an income because they look after the family.

From the above, we can draw the following conclusions: women are realistic about a higher probability of facing obstacles, either in education or work situations. They exhibit a high sense of control of their lives, even through alternative means. Also, women and men agree with the existing gender role differentiation in relation to the family ("It is preferable that women look after the family"), and yet both men and women reject the statement "Women cannot earn an income because they look after the family".

65. "Family education" programmes are offered by organizations like BFLA, BIB and PRIDE-Belize. They mainstream gender analysis in different settings and provide problem-solving skills, self-esteem development and other related training components, especially to youth.

66. A much-needed strategy to be enacted by legislation is the inclusion of family and gender education in the curriculum of the formal system of education at all levels.

67. Other measures that need to be devised include improving awareness among media personnel on the impact that gender-biased messages have on the reinforcement of gender stereotypes.

68. In conjunction with the National Women's Commission, DWA is coordinating and implementing an action plan whose main objective is to inform high-level officials of contributing factors responsible for the creation of stereotyping in different areas of Belizean life.

Article 6

> States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.

69. The laws of Belize contemplate, in chapter 99, under Summary Jurisdiction (Offence), section 4, prostitution as a "petty offence". An individual penalized might be one who:

> (ix) Being a common prostitute or night walker loiters or is in any street or public place for the purpose of prostitution or solicitation to the annoyance of the inhabitants or passengers in a riotous and indecent manner;

(x) Sells or distributes, or offers for sale or distribution, or exhibits to public view, any profane, indecent or obscene book, paper, print, drawing, photograph, painting or representation, or sings any profane song or ballad, or writes or draws any indecent or obscene word, figure or representation upon any wall, door, window, shutter, paling or other conspicuous place, or upon any paper and exposes the said paper to public view, or uses any profane, indecent or obscene language in any street or in any public place, to the annoyance of any other person;

(xxx) Being a common prostitute wanders in any street or place of public resort and behaves in a riotous and indecent manner.

A person who is guilty of a petty offence shall be liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month (4, 9).

70. There are laws for the suppression of brothels. Accordingly, a person who

(a) Keeps or manages, or acts or assists in the management of a brothel; or

(b) Being the tenant, lessee, occupier or person in charge of any premises, knowingly permits such premises or any part thereof to be used as a brothel; or

(c) Being the lessor or landlord, lets the same or any part thereof with the knowledge that such premises or some part thereof are or is to be used as a brothel; or

(d) Being the lessor or landlord of any premises, or the agent of such lessor or landlord, is wilfully a party to the continent of such premises or any part thereof, as a brothel;

(e) Is guilty of an offence and is on summary conviction liable -

(i) In the case of a first conviction, to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months; and

(ii) In the case of a second or subsequent conviction, to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months.

71. Apart from such provisions, there is no direct legislation in Belize that specifically prohibits trafficking in prostitution or the exploitation of prostitutes. An exception is the detention of sex workers who are illegal migrants in Belize, and action is by virtue of their illegal residency and employment, rather than owing to the nature of their activity. In such cases, the establishments employing these sex workers may be fined, but this is not strictly enforced.

72. Nonetheless, there are some economic forces that account for the commerce of women. One is the growing industry of tourism that brings to Belize large numbers of people from urban centres. In 1987, 99,266 tourists came to Belize: a number that exceeds the sexually active population of Belize (people between the ages 15 and 64). The sex trade is highly organized, involving established hotels and bars, informally communicated, although illicit.

73. The long-standing British military presence in the country as the result of the agreement to defend the country from Guatemalan claims of sovereignty contribute to the presence of illicit, although organized, sexual services at multiple sites associated with base locations. Such services are oriented to serving the "needs" of British soldiers, regulated and subject to tight monitoring by military personnel (including health, intelligence and law enforcement staff) on a permanent basis. They constitute the safest places in which sex may be exchanged. The pull-out of the British forces will certainly have an impact on the reorganization and the health-associated risks of these services.

74. There is still another source of sex commerce in Belize. The dual reinforcing situation of a large number of labour immigrants and Central American refugees over the past decade and shortage of labour opportunities in the country account for the recourse to prostitution as a means of survival. This strategy is enhanced by the availability of businesses which act as places of employment and homes for the women who work there.

75. Research has identified that brothels tend to hire exclusively young (mid-teens to mid-twenties) "Spanish", illegal immigrant women who temporarily earn wages that otherwise they would not have (Kane, 1991). In this sense, recognized prostitution in Belize is a gender-specific form of migrant labour that serves the same economic functions for women as agricultural work offers to men, and often for better pay.

76. The transnational forces that account for the presence of organized prostitution include the developing tourist industry, foreign military presence and mass labour migration. The departure of British forces and the growing tourist industry provide a timely opportunity to re-examine legislation that eliminates such exploitation of women. This could take into account the need to strengthen the regulation of premises serving as brothels, to better ensure health screening and monitoring of sex industry workers, and to increase penalties for procuring the services of a prostitute. At the same time, it is considered necessary that prostitution remain a non-criminal ("petty") offence, especially in order to promote improved health standards of workers and premises.

Article 7

> States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

77. The Constitution of Belize guarantees the right to vote at any general election as follows:

"every citizen of Belize or a citizen of any Commonwealth country who has attained the age of eighteen years and who satisfies the requirements of the Representation of the People Ordinance 1978 shall have the right to vote" (92 (a)).

Section 92 also provides for one vote only per person, and that voting be by secret ballot.

78. Also, the Constitution establishes that,

"Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of assembly and association, that is to say, his right to assemble freely and associate with other persons and in particular to form or belong to trade unions or other associations for the protection of his interests or to form or belong to political parties or other political associations" (13, 1).

79. Since 1956, a Village Council System has provided for the Government of Belize at the local level. These councils are responsible for managing community affairs, and over the years women have been active in carrying out action plans and promoting community organizing to meet local needs. But women still lack access to decision-making positions at the local level and their needs are poorly represented in such action plans. At present, there is a legislative initiative to enhance the capacity of Village Councils to administer decentralized financial allocations in order to carry out community priorities. This is an opportunity to include legislative reforms to foster the rights of women to hold positions for the advancement of their needs.

80. With regard to participation in high-level decision-making positions, Belizean women are far behind. At the parliamentary level, during the period 1980-1994 two women held office in the House of Representatives. Over the same period, on recommendation of the Election and Boundaries Commission, the number of seats in the House grew from 18 to 28, and then to 29, on 2 November 1984 and 25 March 1993, respectively. In the nine-person Senate, to which members are appointed, there was one woman in 1980, two in 1985 and 1989 and three in 1994, with the number of men correspondingly declining from eight to six. Tables 1 and 2 provide other indicators of gender access to political power in the public sphere (see annex).

81. Within the area of the law, there are at present 8 out of 11 female attorneys practising in the country. The Bar Association has 46 members, of whom 11 are female. Of 12 magistrates, 6 are women, only one of whom has a law degree and two of whom are in the Family Court. Of three prosecutors, one is female. Of six Crown Counsels, two are female. While women comprise about three quarters of clients in family matters, they are only a small minority of clients in such areas as land dealings, investment matters and business interests. This is considered to reflect their lack of access to economic power.

82. Women's under-representation in key areas of decision-making is widely observed in key positions of public administration and civil service, and of private enterprise. These settings have features that inhibit mobility, such as the retention of seniority rather than merit as the principal basis for job promotion, and the persistent nature of male-oriented "cultures" within senior management and the business structures.

83. Traditional gender role practices and the seclusion of women to the domestic sphere discourage and inhibit women from engaging in activities to reach decision-making structures. Political parties do not provide opportunities for women to advance political careers, and there are no stimuli for running in elections. Palacio (1993) reports that out of 10 elections, women have participated as candidates in only seven. In 1993, women accounted for only 6.7 per cent of the candidates. This contrasts with "informal" participation during election times, when women carry out much of the lobbying, campaigning and organizing of constituencies. When women choose to become political candidates for the advancement of women's interests, they generally feel frustrated by the lack of support for gender-sensitive agendas within their own political associations.

84. In contrast, women have chosen to create or administer their own organizations (whether non-governmental, women's or a community group), where they can more actively advance their interests in the reproductive and productive spheres, as well as exercise their abilities as problem solvers and community leaders. Within such groups, women can also strengthen their natural solidarity networks, their search for collective solutions and their need to break isolation.

85. A distinctive outcome of the capacity of women to organize in alternative settings to influence policy formulation, policy monitoring and policy implementation is the creation of WIN-Belize, whose members are primarily governmental and non-governmental women's organizations. These network organizations are organized following a web structure, by which coordination and action are shared according to annual budgets and human resources, with the purpose fundamentally of fostering individual member's abilities to spearhead and of creating a horizontal chain of command, as opposed to the characteristic vertical structure found in most western organizations.

86. Changes in attitudes and political structures would be necessary to facilitate proportional and/or multi-member representation in local and national governing bodies, to achieve equality of opportunities for women's access to elected positions (see annex, table 3).

Article 8

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations.

87. At the present time, one of the six ambassadorial posts is occupied by a woman (see annex, table 4).

88. Since the United Nations Decade for Women and the meeting at Nairobi, women have been actively involved in attending meetings and conferences in the Caribbean and Central American region to discuss and design strategies regarding policies and plans of action.

89. Women have not yet played a decision-making role in other ministerial sectors, such as agriculture and national security, but to a certain extent, have been doing so in such areas as economic development, finance, housing and local government. Some of the obstacles are closely related to the cultural stereotyping that promotes women in social service careers, such as nursing, teaching or clerical positions. When women have the opportunity to emigrate to foreign countries to pursue professional careers, most of the scholarships are also granted on the same bias.

Article 9

1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.

2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.

90. The Constitution establishes nationality or citizenship rights as follows:

"Every person born in Belize ... shall become a citizen of Belize on Independence Day" (23, 1) and "every person born in Belize on or after Independence Day shall become a citizen of Belize at the date of his birth" (24).

91. However, women's citizenship might change by virtue of marriage:

"Every woman shall become a citizen of Belize on Independence Day if immediately before Independence Day she is married to a person who becomes or ... would have become a citizen of Belize ..." (23, 5).

92. Moreover, the Constitution accepts applications to be registered citizens of Belize from

"a) any person who is married to a citizen of Belize;

"b) any person who has been resident continuously in Belize for a period of five years immediately before the date of his application;

"c) any person who makes a substantial contribution to the economy and/or well-being of Belize or who has rendered distinguished service to Belize" (26, 1).

93. The Belizean Nationality Act (amended in 1985) also establishes eligibility for registration of a spouse, widow or widower of a citizen of Belize, provided

"b) that the applicant has been resident in Belize throughout a period of one year immediately preceding the date of application of such applicant; and

"c) that the applicant is the spouse, or the widow or widower, of a citizen of Belize by descent or registration" (127A, 11 (3)).

Similarly, it is the jurisdiction of the Department of Immigration to refuse registration as a citizen if the applicant:

"e) not being the dependant of a citizen of Belize, has not sufficient means to maintain himself and is likely to become a public charge."

Article 10

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;

(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;

(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;

(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly

those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;

(f) The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

(g) The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;

(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.

94. Belize has a church-state system of education. Primary school is administered by different denominations (Catholic, Methodist, Anglican). Government provides 100 percent of salaries for primary school teachers and 70 per cent for secondary school teachers, and 70 per cent for maintenance costs for the former level and 50 per cent for the latter. In 1992/93, of a total of 269 primary schools in the country, 241 were government-managed or -aided schools.

95. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 14 years. Under the new Government (1993-1998), tuition is free for all through secondary level, including technical, agricultural and vocational training, and is being extended to the first year of the sixth-form level.

96. The educational system is based on the British system, which requires students to pass standardized tests from one level to the next level. Differences between the rural and urban areas are extensive. As one example, in the 1991/92 school year, pupils of urban schools were 2.6 times as likely to be placed in the upper quartile than those from rural schools (34 per cent as opposed to 13 per cent), and only half as likely to be placed in the bottom quartile (19 percent compared to 33 percent): and this before the migration of the presumably better students to Belize City for secondary education.

97. There is a total of 237 primary schools, 74 urban and 163 rural. They employ 1,825 teachers nation-wide, including principals (teaching and non-teaching); 1,261 are female (71 per cent) and 515 male. However, only 45 per cent of principals are female. Belize district has the highest ratio of qualified teachers, at 63 per cent, while Toledo has the lowest, at 28 per cent. Toledo also has the highest ratio of rural schools.

98. The secondary school system is composed of 31 secondary schools: 10 government managed, 16 church or community based, and 5 private schools. There are now junior colleges and sixth forms, or extension facilities, in every district.

99. The education system is organized as follows:

First level:	Pre-school (3-5 years) (mostly community-based centres)
Second level:	Primary education (8 years of duration) Infant I and II and standards I through VI
Third level:	Secondary education Technical education

100. According to chapter 35 B of the Laws of Belize, the University College of Belize Act was "instituted to provide education and training and to undertake research at the university level to meet the development needs of Belize" (4).

101. Just recently, the Ministry of Education established a post of Adult and Continuing Education Officer.

102. Under chapter 29 of the Laws of Belize, the National Council of Education is enacted to be the consultative body advising the Minister on questions of educational policy, and consists of the Chief Education Officer and 15 members appointed by the Minister. There are representatives from the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Teachers' Union, the University of the West Indies, churches of various denominations, trade unions representing technical trades, and teachers of secondary education in church and government managed schools (6, 1). The Laws also contemplate the creation of standing committees of the Council: primary, secondary and further education, technical and agricultural, and teacher training (10, 1). Along with other higher-level officials, DWA and NWC will approach these committees to take further actions to comply with the commitments of the Convention. Examples of such actions include the adoption of a schools' policy on pregnant girls and the development of gender neutrality in textbooks and activities.

Statistical indicators

103. Student enrolment in primary schools (Ministry of Education, 1988) increased by approximately 0.9 per cent annually between 1970 and 1980, while the population increased at a rate of 2.1 per cent during the same period. Thus, net enrolment rates are between 72 and 78 per cent, without taking into account the influx of immigrants. Between 1981 and 1991, those growth rates averaged 3.0 per cent (2.6 per cent between 1990 and 1991). The annual 5-14 year population growth rate in this period averaged 1.9 per cent.

104. By 1990/91, the enrolment rate for school-age children in Belize was 90.0 per cent (Ministry of Education, 1991). The data show gender disparities for those aged 9 years (females 8.4 per cent less than males), 12 years (8.1 per cent less) and 14 years (6.5 per cent less) (11-year-old females exceed males by 5.1 per cent). Enrolment rates are less than 90 per cent at age 12 for females (86.5 per cent) and at age 13 for males (72.4 per cent) and females (71.2 per cent). For age 14, the rate is 56.0 per cent (59.2 per cent for males, 52.7 per cent for females).

105. Overall, there is no gender disparity in aggregate enrolment data for 5- to 14-year-olds: 90.9 per cent for boys and 89.1 per cent for girls. However, there are district-related variations: merely 33.2 per cent of 14-year-old girls in Orange Walk district are enrolled, followed by 42.7 per cent of Orange Walk 14-year-old boys, and 45.0 per cent of Corozal 14-year-old girls, compared to about 70 per cent of boys and girls in Belize district.

106. Gender disparities appear from primary to secondary school. The 1990/91 transition rate to 1991/92 was 76.1 per cent (higher for females at 82.4 per cent than for males at 71.1 per cent. There are also regional disparities: the Belize district rate is 100.0 per cent, perhaps owing to migration from other districts, but in Toledo district the rate is 53.9 per cent. The level of migration to Belize district is unknown.

107. A major factor in the transition rate is access to secondary schools. According to the Ministry of Education, the higher female transition rate is because of higher female scores as compared to those for boys in the Belize National Selection Examinations (BNSE). Again, urban-rural disparities show up in BNSE results. In the 1991/92 school year, pupils of urban schools were 2.6 times more likely to be placed in the upper quartile than those from rural schools (34 per cent as compared to 13 per cent), and only half as likely to be placed in the bottom quartile (19 per cent compared to 33 per cent). These percentages may also be attributed to migration of the presumably better students to Belize district.

108. In 1980, 2.2 per cent of males attained university education, and only 0.9 per cent of females. At the time, 7.3 per cent of the population had no education, and only 72.7 per cent completed primary school. By 1991, the number of males in university fell to 1.6 per cent, but females remained steady at 0.9 per cent. According to the same census data, between 1980 and 1991 the numbers of admissions to primary education rose to 21.9 per cent, but those completing primary school had declined by a fifth, to 57.8 per cent. Merely 25 per cent completed secondary education.

109. Limited academic performance is even more evident at the end of secondary school, with a very low pass rate in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations. Gender data are apparently not yet available for CXC.

110. An October 1993 paper prepared by BATAPS (drawing on SPEAR research) provides some internal educational indicators: school absenteeism rates are high and BNSE results are poor. On the other hand, approximately 75 per cent of teachers fail the required Teachers' College entrance examinations, but continue to teach.

111. Some of the reasons explaining withdrawal from primary education are the need to work at an early age or to care for younger siblings. At the secondary level, reasons are more likely to be related to student behavioural factors.

112. Non-governmental organizations such as BATAPS and SPEAR also cite research that emphasizes that young people, particularly women, withdraw owing to limited economic resources rather than to lack of interest. It has also been reported that teenage pregnancy accounts for a sizeable number of female drop-outs.

113. With the limited exception of one denominational secondary school, young Belizean women may be expelled because of pregnancy, or be denied the opportunity to resume their education following childbirth. Although there is no educational policy in this area, the National Policy Statement on Women emphasizes the right to remain in schools, and the importance of promoting further education opportunities for women. The main impetus for expelling pregnant students is pressure from the parents of other students.

114. Unmarried teachers may be fired owing to pregnancy. Once again, reflecting the nature of the church-state relationship, there is some discretion exercised in this regard, related to the school administration and denomination. In some cases, the teacher may be permitted to take leave without pay and subsequently to return to work. At present, no legislation prohibits the firing of pregnant teachers.

115. DWA has created and over the years strengthened the Young Adult Programme (YAP), with the following objectives:

(a) To encourage the self-development of Belizean girls that are neither working nor attending school;

(b) To provide avenues for vocational and skills training in non-traditional areas;

(c) To provide family education and career counselling.

Other non-governmental organizations engaged in similar programmes are PRIDE-Belize, BFLA, BOWAND, YWCA and the Youth Enhancement Service (YES).

116. However, there are no other additional measures to support women to resume their education, such as flexible schedules, financial support and access to child care. Improvement of pre-school access would give opportunities to women to pursue further education and to enter the paid workforce.

117. Existing technical institutions, such as the Centre for Employment Training in Belize City, are providing "non-traditional" careers especially related to young women and to people with disabilities under the introduction of a quota system for student intakes. However, at the district level, there are no similar opportunities.

118. At present, an alternate secondary education programme in Belmopan, Dangriga and Belize City caters to young mothers wishing to return to school after giving birth. The Saint Mary's Continuation School is managed by the Belize Council of Churches and the YWCA programme for continuing education and financially supported by the Government.

119. Belize's literacy rate has been estimated to be as high as 96 per cent (UNDP, 1994). Such estimates are regarded with great scepticism.

120. In Belize, functional literacy rates have been related to degree of formal education. For example, the Central Statistical Office equated literacy with level of schooling. Comparing 1980 and 1991 census results, it observed:

(a) Overall literacy dropped from 74.3 per cent to 70.3 per cent. That is, the percentage of those not entering primary school ('illiterate') and of those not completing primary school ('semi-literate') increased;

(b) The largest number of absolute illiterate and semi-literate is in the 20-34 year age group. The second highest number of semi-literate people is in the 14-19 age group;

(c) Data do not show gender disparity in literacy or illiteracy levels, either in 1980 or in 1991;

(d) The improvement in the group with the lowest literacy rate (the Maya) (from 45.6 per cent in 1980 to 53.4 per cent in 1991) may be attributed to changing attitudes rather than to improved educational opportunities;

(e) Literacy rates are higher in urban than in rural areas, but the gap has widened over this period;

(f) Mestizo immigration may account for declining literacy levels; in fact, the literacy rate for the native-born population remained stable between 1980 and 1991.

121. In 1991, some of the most compelling issues identified in this sector were pre-service and in-service teachers' training, particularly in rural areas, and the development of vocational-oriented curriculum. At present, the Primary Education Development Project (PEDP) attempts to improve teacher education, curriculum development and planning for education. This provides opportunity to include gender-sensitive planning and discussion of gender-sensitive teaching practices.

122. In 1991, DWA and SPEAR, under the auspices of the UNICEF-United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) subregional project, conducted a study to explore the extent of gender stereotyping in Belizean textbooks. It was found that both genders are depicted in so-called "traditional" roles and professions. Only 6 per cent of male images were as "members of boards of directors". Women's occupations were "manual labour" (62 per cent), "office" (11 per cent) and "artists" (27 per cent). In 72 per cent of the illustrations, men were in leadership situations. Males tend to be depicted as "serious" and females as "affective".

123. After the study, both organizations engaged in a series of awareness training workshops provided as a pre-service training strategy. However, an institutional strategy at the ministerial level is critical to eliminate gender stereotyping and discriminatory teaching practices.

124. In 1990, the Government's Development Plan contemplated the creation of a National Sports Council. Since then, a major thrust has been the promotion of the Women in Sports programme, under the coordination of DWA. However, at the formal curriculum levels, there are no provisions to ensure equal participation of women in sports and physical education.

125. The Laws of Belize (chap. 9) accord annual scholarships to

"deserving persons with the required qualifications to enable them to undergo approved courses of study at a university, college or other institution in the British Commonwealth or elsewhere" (30, 1).

However, no direct instruction is given to promote equal opportunities for women.

126. Various educational indicators are presented in table 11 (see annex).

Article 11

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

(b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

(c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

(d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the equality of work;

(e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;

(f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

(a) To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

(b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;

(c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

(d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

127. The Constitution protects the right to work of every person. This is stated as follows:

> "No person shall be denied the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, whether by pursuing a profession or occupation or by engaging in a trade or business, or otherwise" (15, 1),

subject to such provisions as the public interest, the protection of the rights or freedoms of others, or restricting the right to work of non-Belizeans (15, 3).

128. The Constitution protects people from being "treated in a discriminatory manner by any person or authority" (16, 2), except in certain circumstances, including where any law applies "with respect to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death or other like matters which is the personal law of persons" (16, 4, c), and subject to such provisions as the public interest and the protection of the rights or freedoms of others (16, 7). The Constitution defines "discriminatory" as "affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by sex, race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed" (16, 3).

129. The Labour Department is headed by the Labour Commissioner, appointed by the Governor-General (chap. 234). The Labour Commissioner is responsible for investigating representations, the settlement of disputes and grievances, informing the Minister, collecting and disseminating data on employment, specifically of women and children, strengthening trade unionism and enforcing the Labour Act (234, 4).

130. There is also provision for the existence of a Labour Advisory Board (chap. 234, 19), whose main duty is to study and make recommendations on all matters affecting workers (234, 20). It consists of three persons representing employers, three persons representing workers and three representing the Government. All persons are appointed by the Minister (234, 19, 1).

131. The following provisions are established to regulate working relations: periods of notice (234, 40, 1); breach of contract where period of employment is defined (234, 44, 1); termination of contract under incapacity for injury caused on the working situation or by occupational diseases (234, 47); working days and working hours, this being 45 hours per week (234, 116, 1); wages for normal working days (234, 117, 5), for public holidays (234, 2-4); and overtime (234, 18).

132. However, these regulations explicitly state that they do not cover the following categories of workers: shop assistants, workers who are employed wholly or mainly to watch over agricultural property or who reside on such

property, provided that in each case the property does not exceed 100 acres and is not used for industrial processing or manufacture of any kind, or workers who are remunerated by the piece or by the task and are not subject to continuous supervision (234, 119, 1). Women are likely to be employed in shops, or perform domestic duties to earn a living, and/or work the land for subsistence agriculture. This regulation certainly constrains women from equality of opportunity as workers.

133. Otherwise, the following regulations protect women as well as men: break of an hour in a normal working day (234, 121); night rest period (234, 122), shifts (234, 123) and sick leave (234, 131).

134. Employers who do not comply with holiday provisions, sick leave and sick benefits are guilty of an offence, liable under summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or to both (234, 133).

135. The Laws also express that "no person shall employ during the night, in a public or private industrial undertaking: (a) a woman; or (b) a person under the age of eighteen years" (234, 161).

136. Contravention of this law is an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred and fifty dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months (234, 161, 2). However, women who hold responsible positions of a managerial or technical character or women employed in health and welfare service are exempted (234, 162).

137. Regarding maternity protection and benefits, chapter 234, 177 (parts xv and xvi), provide for payment of one third of the person's wage for a period of up to three months, including a compulsory six weeks after delivery. There is no further provision to enable a person to take extended periods of leave following delivery.

138. In Belize, women are granted the right to use the Social Security Act (chap. 34), by which

> "every person who on or after the appointed day, being over the age of fourteen years and under the age of sixty-five years, is employed in insurable employment shall become insured" (3, 1).

139. Women are entitled to injury benefits under the Social Security Act. Where a worker does not qualify for social security, workmen's compensation will cover the benefits.

140. For the purposes of analysing protection to women from their different employers, it is necessary to look specifically to the laws within the Public Service, where a high number of women are employed. In Belize, the Government recognizes that the Public Service is the chief instrument through which the policies of government are implemented.

141. "Public service" means "service in a civil capacity under the government of Belize" (chap. 22, 1). Relevant Acts include the Widows' and Children's Pension

Ordinance (chap. 25), the Pensions Act (chap. 22), a Transfer Policy for Public Service (circular No. 38 of 1992) and the Government Workers' Regulation (106, 3).

142. For the purposes of maternity benefits, the Government Workers' Regulations provide that female workers are entitled to 84 days maternity leave (regulation 30). They may take this in the form of six weeks before their expected date of delivery and six weeks after delivery, on half pay. Prior to 1992, women were entitled to one third (rather than the present one half) of their wages while on maternity leave. Regulation 30 (5) provides that no female officer shall be given notice of dismissal or expiration of contract during any period of maternity or associated sick leave. The maternity leave provisions have the added flexibility of enabling the employee to work up to the expected date of delivery, and then to take the remaining post-delivery leave on full pay.

143. Efforts have been made to improve benefits and working knowledge of public service officers, in aspects such as public relations, secretarial development, clerical promotional exams, and supervisory courses. But there is still the need to sensitize high-level officials on the particular needs of women, the importance of minimizing the gap between the number of males and females in top-management positions, and the necessity to upgrade the systems of promotion of women. There are, at present, no affirmative action policies with regard to employment in the Public Service. The use of seniority rather than solely the criterion of merit will often disadvantage the promotion of a female public servant by virtue of the likelihood of a period of maternity leave, child-rearing responsibilities or family caregiving disrupting employment, without necessarily reflecting that person's capacity to perform a position's duties efficiently and skilfully.

144. Pensions, gratuities and allowances are granted by the Governor-General (3, 1) in accordance with established regulations. Also, the power to grant any award under any pension law vests in the Governor-General (113, 1).

145. Under the Laws of Belize, the Pensions Act (chap. 22) covers personnel:

(a) If she or he retires from public service under the Government of Belize;

(b) On or after she or he attaining the normal retirement age, or in special cases with the approval of the Governor-General, any lower age not being less than 50 years; or

(c) On compulsory retirement, for the purposes of facilitating improvement in the organization or the department to which she or he belonged (6, 1).

146. Specifically, the Laws of Belize (chap. 22) state that, if a female officer,

> "having been in public service for not less than five years and having been confirmed in a pensionable office, retires or is required to retire for the reason that she is about to marry, or has married, and is not eligible for

the grant of any pension or otherwise eligible for gratuity under this Part, she may be granted, on production within six months after her retirement, or such longer period as the Governor-General may in any case allow, of satisfactory evidence of her marriage, a gratuity of an amount not exceeding -

"a) one year's annual pensionable emoluments; or

"b) five times the annual amount of the pension which might have been granted to her under regulation 4 (1) had there been no qualifying period and had that regulation been applicable to her, whichever amount shall be less.

Provided that a gratuity under this regulation shall not be payable to an officer who was married for longer than a period of six months at the date of retirement" (4, 6).

147. Pension benefits mean any pensions, compensation, gratuities or other like allowances for persons in respect of their service as public officers or for the widows, children or dependants or personal representatives of such persons in respect of such service (112, 5).

148. Pension law means any law relating to the grant to any person or to the widow, children dependants or personal representative. Women failed to redress equality of work opportunities despite the 41 per cent expansion of the job market over the previous decade, picking up only one third of all new jobs. Moreover, women are not equally represented in most of the jobs and occupations within the labour force.

149. The 1993 labour force survey shows that:

"the female labour force is more highly educated but less well paid, less likely to be employed, and more likely to experience long-term unemployment than the male labour force. In October 1993, barely 19.7 per cent of the male workforce had at least a High School education, compared to 40.5 per cent of the female workforce, whilst 64.6 per cent of males earnt at least $240 per month, compared to 51.1 per cent of females ... Higher education is also less likely to assist women to gain employment: only 13.9 per cent of males with at least a High School education were unemployed, compared to 20.7 per cent of females. Women are also twice as likely to experience protracted periods of unemployment than are men: 53.2 per cent of unemployed females but 26.7 per cent of unemployed males had been unemployed for more than twelve months in October 1993" (Johnson, 1994, p. 5).

Johnson argues that the single largest net change in the past decade was the increase in women not in the labour force, followed by the increase of men in the labour force (in jobs) (ibid., p. 4). The 1991 census reports that 65 per cent of women and 4 per cent of men were in "home duties", and the Central Statistical Office attributed this as the single major reason for the gross underestimate of unemployment in the 1991 census (2.1 per cent for females), whereas the 1993 labour force survey yielded a rate for women of

14.6 per cent. In fact, while the censuses had yielded female unemployment rates of one half that for men, the survey showed that the rate for women was at least double that for men, as well as revealing an unemployment rate treble that of the 1991 census (ibid., p. 6). It is considered that the growth of the number of women in "home duties" conceals a high rate of "hidden" unemployment, as well as constituting a large category of unpaid labour, and is symptomatic of the nature of the domestic informal economy.

150. When comparing figures of labour force participation by women in Belize with women in the Caribbean, rates are somewhat lower. Detailed studies are needed in the field of economic participation of Belizean women to answer questions such as the extent of underemployment, gender differences in quality of employment, the marginalization of labour, urban/rural opportunities, and the effect of repatriations of funds by Belizeans in North America.

151. Childcare is not easily available for working mothers, whether in urban or in rural areas. For example, lack of child-care services might account for the most-cited causes of absenteeism among women. Government does not support, financially or otherwise, child-care arrangements. In Belize City, only seven day-care centres serve about 100 children, at high cost, perhaps $15 per week per child. Women may earn an average of $50 per week. Day care is subsidized by Government, which provides no day care of its own, despite being a major employer of women.

152. For the past four years, the non-governmental organization BOWAND has been advocating changes to the labour laws and policies regarding minimum wages, working conditions, women in the unions and, particularly, upgrading the situation of domestic workers. In August 1992 it adopted a policy on the minimum wage, which reads as follows:

1. The minimum wage for all categories, and in particular for domestic workers and shop assistants, should be enough to meet a basic minimum cost of living.

2. The minimum wage for traditionally female jobs must be equal to that for traditionally male jobs.

3. All minimum wages should be indexed (increased) annually to reflect increases in the cost of living.

153. Domestic workers have the right to six paid holidays per year, plus public and bank holidays. If working on most public and bank holidays, domestic workers have the right to be paid "time and a half". During Christmas, Good Friday or Easter Monday, they have the right to be paid double time.

154. Domestic workers are also entitled to social security benefits, such as sickness (16 days per year) and injury benefits, maternity benefits (12 weeks), survivors' benefits, and retirement benefits (BOWAND, 1994).

155. Equal pay for work of equal value is, generally speaking, true only with regard to the civil service, which is the largest single employer in the country, within positions occupied by both gender. Elsewhere, the division of

labour is such that most employed women are concentrated in female-dominated occupations with traditionally low status and wages (which is not to be confused with lower value work). Technical assistance is also required to establish skills parities between "male" and "female" occupations in order to facilitate reforms to legislation and industrial awards to achieve wage equity.

156. According to income-generation data, 76 per cent of female employees earn less than the average annual income of $6,000, as opposed to 59 per cent among males (UNICEF, 1990).

157. With the exception of teachers and civil servants, women's occupations are not unionized.

158. The Constitution establishes protection from "torture or inhumane or degrading punishment or other treatment" (7). Similarly, it protects any person from "slavery or servitude" (8, 1) and establishes that "No person shall be required to perform forced labour" (8, 2).

159. The first Women Workers' Union was registered in the country on 20 March 1991. In April that year, workers went on strike against Civil Textile Ltd., a Taiwanese garment factory, demanding better working conditions, breaks and higher wages. In response, 12 workers were fired, including the seven female executives of the Union. In May, there was a settlement of the dispute and workers returned to their jobs. This was a breakthrough for women's rights, since, in the past, laws pertaining to working conditions, including provisions for lunch breaks and overtime pay, were typically ignored, generally with the sanction of the Ministry of Labour.

160. In the past three years, there have been measures to increase the participation of young women in non-traditional occupations. Thus, the Centre for Employment Training in Belize City is using a training model specifically designed for women. It is expected that other districts will also undertake the same initiative. To some extent this conforms with obligations under the Convention, but more needs to be done in both the formal and the private sector, where opportunities exist to improve employment access and to eliminate obstacles to inequality.

161. Further statistical indicators on employment are presented in table 13 (see annex).

Article 12

1. State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

162. The approach to women's health has focused on serving the needs of women as mothers, emphasizing pre-natal, intrapartum and child health care. To a large extent, this legacy continues, although attention is now being given to a more comprehensive orientation, and to adolescent women as a specific population.

163. Under the Belize National Policy Statement for Women, there is a commitment from the Government to support family-life activities and reproductive health education and services targeted at both men and women in rural and urban areas through public and private schools, mass media, health facilities and community training programmes.

164. An understanding of the historic evolution of the country aids in explaining why there have been no State efforts to control demographic growth. That is, during the period of nation-building, there was a call to populate the country. Children were seen as the "wealth" of the country. Another factor, as explained earlier, is the influence of religion in shaping Government policies, which still impedes the inclusion of life education in formal curricula.

165. A look at the population trends, however, shows a decline in the total fertility rate - average number of children per women - from 7 in 1960 to 4.6 in 1991, a figure that is, nonetheless, higher than in other countries in the Caribbean (3.5). Moreover, variations exist between urban:rural distinctions, educational level, ethnic group, as well as by standard of housing.

166. Thus, urban areas show a rate of 3.9 against 5.8 in rural areas. Women with high educational attainment exhibit 2.8 children on average. Measured against availability of household amenities, those with the fewest basic amenities have an average of four more children per women than those with the maximum number of amenities. Fertility rates are as follows for ethnic groups: 3.6 for Creoles; 4.8 for Mestizos, and 5.4 for others, including Garifuna and Maya women. Immigrants and refugees display a fertility rate of 5.7, well above the national average.

167. Almost 19 per cent of the "everborns" (all babies born, whether they survive or not) are of mothers under 20 years of age, but statistics from the Ministry of Health indicate 32 per cent in 1990. Some 21 per cent of the total population are mothers of childbearing age (15-44). As an example, according to the already-cited 1993 DWA-UNICEF study looking at the situation of young adults in urban Belize, 10 per cent of the women interviewed had been pregnant in the past 12 months, and two thirds were younger than 20 years. Thirteen per cent of the women had one or more live births, 9 per cent under the age of 20. Seventy-nine per cent reported not having a paid job and 64 per cent reported living with a partner.

168. Termination of pregnancies outside the formal health sector represents an area of risk to women. While there is conditional legal provision for the termination of pregnancies, actual access is highly restricted, such that there is negligible approval of terminations. In fact, of approximately 700 terminations in the past four years (an estimated 20 per cent of an estimated 3,500 abortions, including miscarriages) only one seems to have been legally approved.

169. In 1990, a morbidity study showed that "unspecified abortions" was the third cause of hospitalization and "disorder of menstruation and other abnormal bleeding from female genital tract" was the sixth cause of hospitalization. At present, the Ministry of Health reports a very small incidence of septic abortions and abortion-related maternal mortality, mainly among low-income women. Abortion has not been identified as a cause of maternal death, although it is a main cause of hospitalization.

170. The Criminal Code penalizes abortion:

> "(1) Every person who intentionally and unlawfully causes abortion or miscarriage shall be liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.
>
> "(2) Every woman being with child who, with intent to procure her own miscarriage, unlawfully administers to herself any poison or other noxious thing, or unlawfully uses any instrument or other means whatever with the like intent, and every person who, with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman, whether she is or is not with child, unlawfully administers to her or causes to be taken by her any poison or other noxious thing, or unlawfully uses any instrument or other means whatever with the like intent, shall be guilty of felony and being convicted thereof shall be liable to imprisonment for life.
>
> "(3) Every person who unlawfully supplies or procures any poison or other noxious thing, or any instrument or thing, whatever, knowing that the same is intended to be unlawfully used or employed with intent to procure the miscarriage of any woman whether she is or is not with child, shall be guilty of misdemeanor.
>
> "(4) Every person who, with intent to destroy the life of a child capable of being born alive, by any wilful act causes a child to die before it has an existence independent of its mother, shall be guilty of felony, to wit, of child destruction, and shall be liable on conviction thereof to imprisonment for life:
>
> > "Provided that no person shall be found guilty of a crime under this subsection unless it is proved that the act which caused the death of the child was not done in good faith for the purposes only of preserving the life of the mother" (84, 108).

171. The "material time" of pregnancy is above 28 weeks (84, 108, 5). Sections 124 and 125 further address abortion:

> "(1) The crime of causing abortion or miscarriage of a woman can be committed either by that woman or by any other person, and that woman or any other person can be guilty of using means with intent to commit that crime, although the woman may not in fact be pregnant.
>
> "(2) The crime of causing abortion can be committed by causing a woman to be prematurely delivered of a child with intent unlawfully to cause or hasten the death of the child" (84, 125).

"(1) In order that a child may be such a person that it may be murder or manslaughter to cause its death, it is necessary that before its death the child should have been completely brought forth alive from the body of the mother.

"(2) It is not necessary either that a circulation of blood independent of the mother's circulation should have commenced in the child, or that the child should have breathed, or that it should have been detached from the mother by severance of the umbilical cord, and it is murder or manslaughter (as the case may be) to cause death to happen to a child after it becomes a person within the meaning of this section by means of harm caused to it before it became such person" (84, 124).

172. In Belize, termination of pregnancy is permitted under certain conditions:

"(1) A person shall not be guilty of an offence under the law relating to abortion or miscarriage when a pregnancy is terminated by a registered medical practitioner if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith -

"(a) That the continuance of the pregnancy would invoke risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated; or

"(b) That there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

"(2) In determining whether the continuance of a pregnancy would invoke such risk of injury to health as is mentioned in subsection (1) (a), account may be taken of the pregnant woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment" (84, 109).

173. Under the Criminal Code, surgical or medical treatment that causes death is not penalized. Thus,

"Where any person does an act in good faith for purposes of surgical or medical treatment, an intent to cause death shall not be presumed from the fact that the act was or appeared likely to cause death" (84, 128).

174. High incidence of cervical cancer and an increasing number of women with infertility seem to be linked, at least partly, to the incidence and frequency of abortions (CSO and others, 1992). Over the past years rates of deaths owing to cancer have been increasing. This is largely attributable to the fact that cancer in women is usually diagnosed in the later stages.

175. Since 1992, Belize has had the second highest incidence of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in Central America, after Honduras. Women in Belize are at an increasing risk of HIV/AIDS infection owing to the economic forces canvassed under article 6 on measures against the exploitation of women.

176. The Belize health budget continues to be very dependent upon external funding, which accounted for about 75 per cent of capital expenditure and 40 per cent of recurrent expenditure; almost one half goes to hospital-based services. There has been no real increase in the budget for preventive services. Salaries constitute 20 to 21 per cent of community and preventive services outlays.

177. Public health studies have identified problems associated with high fertility and immuno-preventable and contagious diseases, gender gaps in service provision and access, and early diagnosis and quick treatments as major causes of death. More recently, guidelines and standards follow Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO) mandates, including a trend towards a public health care strategy. This is reflected in a primary health focus combining mobile/outreach services and education and public awareness. This strategy is expected to reach the poorest and more isolated inhabitants of the country for whom transportation and access is costly and time-consuming.

178. The Health Education and Community Participation Bureau, established within the Ministry of Health in 1981, designs and implements health education programmes and strengthens the capacities of health workers to be sensitive to women's dual/multiple roles. As an element of the strategy towards decentralization, there are district health teams (each with three health educators) which in turn are responsible for providing knowledge on community preventive health education to village health teams organized in conjunction with village councils.

179. A non-governmental agency, the Breast Is Best League, promotes breastfeeding practices. A policy was drafted and is awaiting approval by the Ministry of Health. It aims to help eliminate bottle-feeding practices in the country's major hospitals. It is hoped that this policy will make provisions regarding the time factor that is entailed by breastfeeding and its impact on women's time.

180. A programme of training for traditional birth attendants has been relatively successful, with an estimated 80 per cent coverage. There has been a corresponding improvement in the rates of hospital births and of births attended by trained health personnel.

181. The PAHO-funded Women's Health Project is an opportunity to integrate health concerns beyond the reproductive sphere. Since 1989/90, the Ministry of Health, through HECOPAB and the Public Health Nurses Division, has been a member of the Women, Health and Development Network, within the Central American region. The most significant areas of work are the promotion of legal reforms on domestic violence and sexual harassment and, in particular, ensuring that health information systems are gender-based. Recently, it initiated a study on morbidity and mortality rates of women and men, as well as a study of the health situation of women in the Corozal district. The Project hopes to incorporate other areas of attention, such as stress on women.

182. The Belize Family Life Association provides access to educational services, addressing issues of reproductive health, pregnancy and the post-natal period,

in most districts. These services are culturally sensitive and draw upon the country's artistic and creative resources. Support for CORE (communicate, organize, relate and educate) youth groups, and an under-20 club in Belize City is also provided. These confront concerns about teenage sexual awareness and pregnancy, providing a constructive environment with the objective of building self-esteem and problem-solving capacities.

183. Other institutional plans include conducting research on key areas of women's health, strengthening gender databases within the health system, targeting the formal curricula of the school health education programme and the nursing school, and promoting public awareness on the other areas of health concerns for women.

184. A final aspect not discussed in change strategies within the health sector is the situation of workers within the health system, which is mainly composed of women. Most health services are assumed to be an extension of the "domestic" role of caretaking, which serves to divert attention from the necessity of upgrading work-related conditions.

185. Further statistical indicators on health are presented in table 12 (see annex).

Article 13

States Parties shall take all appropriate measure to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:

(a) The right to family benefits;

(b) The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;

(c) The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

186. The laws of Belize make no distinction with regard to access to loans, mortgages and/or financial credit. Financial institutions do not require consent by husband or common-law partners. However, affirmative action measures could be included in financial institutions providing credit for women. Collection of gender-disaggregated data on credit and business must also be promoted.

187. Women as mothers have, in their own right, access to family benefits, like children's allowances, public housing, health insurance or coverage and maintenance. Discussion under article 16 provides detailed information.

188. There are no legal obstacles for women to participate in recreational activities, sports and other aspects of cultural life. Educational institutions provide equal opportunity to physical education, although cultural practices still refrain women from particular sports. The Women and Sport Project, funded

by the Government, fosters women's participation in all areas of sport experiences.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

(c) To benefit directly from social security programmes;

(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

(e) To organize self-help groups and cooperatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

(f) To participate in all community activities;

(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

189. Almost a quarter of the population (23 per cent) live in Belize City, the largest urban centre. Urban areas comprise 47.5 per cent of the population, of whom 50.7 per cent are female. About 12,600 people live in rural communities with fewer than 200 inhabitants.

190. An urban to rural trend has been observed in recent years, with an urban:rural balance of 52:48, which is in contrast to the rest of the developing

world. Clearly, a contributing factor is the influx of economic migrants who predominantly settle in the less populated areas.

191. In 1994, 84.4 per cent of women in the labour force were employed. In the urban areas, a higher percentage (86.4) were employed compared to women in the rural areas, with approximately 80 per cent employed.

192. Since 1956, when the Social Development Department engaged in the creation of the village council system, rural populations have been involved in the modernization process in their efforts to enhance self-help capabilities through cooperatives and credit unions financed by the Government. Some of these councils acquired the capacity to organize and advocate for education, public health and land, without, however, the necessary financial resources or decision-making autonomy to undertake their initiatives. Women were key, and continue to be key, in carrying out plans, except in the southern region, where Mayan and Ketchi Indians relegate women to the domestic sphere.

193. The Government of Belize is currently in the process of adopting a village council act, which aims to increase formal local autonomy in a range of areas of local government and community participation. With no specific provision in the draft bill to directly promote the participation of women, or to address traditional gender inequity in decision-making structures, special attention will need to be given to this aspect as the act is put into effect.

194. Rural women belong to a diversity of community groups aiming at the well-being of rural and urban communities throughout the country. The 4-H clubs for youth, the citizens' associations, women's groups, cooperatives and credit unions, and community banks, all promoted by governmental and non-governmental interventions, have all benefited from women's participation. Financial and, in some cases, technical assistance from international agencies have supported their ventures.

195. However, women's contributions to the development of plans and programmes were not feasible through the existing structuring of social relations in Belizean institutions. Visibly, they have been hierarchical and based on a bureaucratic model that impedes equal access to decision-making. On the other hand, certain attributes of the historical development of the differential economies of the districts have not enabled rural women to profit completely from their participation. Women's role as producers still needs to be enhanced by economic policies.

196. A historic assessment indicates that agriculture was, until the 1980s, a sector disregarded by economic policies. The climate and topography of Belize, plus economic interests in timber extraction, discouraged such attention. In colonial times, "the intensive exploitation of the rich forest resources of Belize was accompanied by almost complete neglect of agriculture" (Bolland, 1977).

197. Another significant factor is the conflict over land ownership, both in the northern regions and in Stann Creek district. In the 1960s, agro-industry was introduced: sugar in the north, banana, citrus and other crops in the south. During the early 1980s, Belize had approximately 5.6 million acres (2.24 million

hectares), of which more than 40 per cent was suitable for agriculture. Only 15 per cent of this was under cultivation despite the attractive climate and soil types. Three quarters of the 15 per cent was cultivated by mechanized commercial farmers mainly for export crops. The rest was used for milpa and diversified farming.[3]

198. Moreover, the emphasis on agriculture has mainly been for exports rather than for local marketing and consumption. The sugar industry has increased polarization among the large producers, owners of land and technologies, and labourers. Women, as already noted in the account of the labour force, had become more dependent on cash economy and less engaged in farming. However, at present, 28 per cent of sugar quota holders are women.

199. Diversity in livelihood characterizes rural populations. This includes cash remittances, artesanal trades, sale of surplus subsistence crops and fish, cash cropping of citrus and part-time labour of agro-industries (Palacio, 1992).

200. The establishment of non-governmental organizations in rural areas contributed to the organization of income-generating women's groups, sometimes with the introduction of community banks to foster collective organization and sustainability. This has especially been a major focus of the efforts of the Belize Enterprise for Sustained Technology.

201. Some of the identified difficulties for such groups are shortage of skills and problems in marketing capabilities, as well as difficulties in the operation of income-generating enterprises. This has limited their potential as economic alternatives. The present Government is committed to work closely with non-governmental organizations for the realization of the full potential of these groups.

202. Cooperatives and credit unions received governmental stimulus in the 1970s. By 1980 there were 45 cooperatives and 39 credit unions located in all districts. Fishing cooperatives are the most successful, but women rarely belong to these.

203. The Development Finance Corporation (DFC) is a parastatal agency that contributes to the operation and development of the agricultural sector. Its advantage over loan banks is that DFC includes longer repayment periods and lower interest rates. There are no gender differences in the requirements to access these funds.

204. Belize is upgrading its public health system in order to be more accessible, more preventative and more comprehensive for women than simply a focus on maternal and child health services. Thus, the public health mobile strategy is aimed to offer equal access to health services to rural women. Still, lack of sufficient specialized personnel to address all spheres of primary health and to oversee the specific needs of rural women, such as their exposure to environmental hazards, diminish the impact of such access. The effort of the health sector in developing a comprehensive strategy should also emphasize the need to enforce regulations that take into account women's multiple roles in rural areas.

Article 15

1. States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.

2. States parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.

3. States Parties agree that all contracts and all private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.

4. States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.

205. Women are granted equality with men under the laws of Belize. The Constitution guarantees that, except in certain circumstances, including where any law applies "with respect to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property on death or other like matters which is the personal law of persons" (16, 4, c), and subject to such provisions as the public interest and the protection of the rights or freedoms of others (16, 7), "no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person or authority" (16, 2). Women are treated equally in the courts and can sue and be sued in their own name.

206. Female attorneys represent clients in court. Of the 12 magistrates, six are women, two of whom are in the family court. Of the six Crown counsel, two are female.

207. Women may serve on juries. There are some criteria that need to be met, whether by men or by women, namely, qualifications and income bracket (income tax rules). Thus, jurors must work within the private sector, however, not related in any way to legal aspects or to law firms. Public officers may not serve on a jury. In general, lawyers are in charge of determining the members of the jury.

208. Women may also serve as witnesses with no restrictions. Their testimony carries the same weight as that of men.

209. Women have equal access to legal assistance, and they come in larger numbers to request legal services. This is attributed to the nature of the claims in which they are involved, such as custody, maintenance and divorce.

210. The Legal Aid Department, established by the Bar Association of Belize, provides low-cost legal services, generally at one third of what is charged by a private lawyer. The Legal Aid Department consists of a Board of Directors and a resident attorney, and is structured on a roster-like basis that requires all members to render services when available. Clients are supposed to pay other costs such as publications, office services and the like.

211. If women or men are unable to pay for the service, there is an attempt to channel the case to supporting structures, such as the Ministry of Human Resources, Social Security and the like. In any case, some cost is involved.

212. A woman may become an owner of a property under the following circumstances: under a contract, by succession, under a trust.

213. The Married Woman's Property Ordinance of the laws of Belize attributes the following powers to a married woman:

"1) Every married woman shall

"a) be capable of acquiring, holding and disposing of any property whatever;

"b) be capable of rendering herself, and be rendered, liable in respect of any tort, contract, debt or obligation;

"c) be capable of suing and being sued, either in tort or in contract or otherwise; and

"d) be subject to the law relating to bankruptcy and to the enforcement of judgement and orders, in all respect as if she were a femme sole [single woman].

"2) From and after 8th August 1953 all the rights, powers and authorities of the husband existing at common law over and in relation to the property of a wife acquired before or after marriage shall cease to exist, and the husband shall not be liable in respect of any debt or obligation of the wife whenever incurred and every married woman shall be entitled to sue and be liable to be sued in all courts of law in her own name without the intervention of her husband. A married woman has, in her own name, the same remedies for the protection and security of her own property as if she were a femme sole. She is also competent to act as a next friend or guardian ad litem" (14, 3). (A guardian ad litem is a person who agrees or is appointed to appear and act for an infant, or person of unsound mind not so found, who is made defendant to proceedings in court.)

214. Women have equal voice on property acquired. Chapter 142, section 1, reads as follows:

"Subject to this Ordinance property which:

"a) Immediately before 8th August 1953 was the separate property of a married woman or held for her separately or in equity or

"b) belongs at the time of her marriage to a woman married after that date or

"c) after that date is acquired by or devolves upon a married woman

shall belong to her in all respect as if she were a femme sole, i.e. like an unmarried woman, and may be disposed of accordingly."

215. Under the law of contract, a woman may acquire movable or immovable properties. Married and unmarried women have the same capacity to contract under the law, but especially under the law of agency a wife may enter into contract for necessaries with or without the knowledge of the husband when the husband neglects or deserts the wife or the family. The necessaries include, for example, food, clothes and medicine.

216. Chapter 160 of the laws of Belize, the Administration of Estates Act, grants succession to real and personal estate on intestacy. Section 54 states that a wife is absolutely entitled to the personal chattels and half of the real property, that is when she has children, on the death of the husband.

217. A married or unmarried woman is entitled to succeed to properties from her parents or relations in accordance with this act.

218. The Woman's Property Ordinance (chap. 142, sect. 7) relates to the acquisition and disposition of a trust estate by an unmarried woman. Other than this, a woman can become a beneficiary of a trust property under a will or codicil. In some circumstances, with regard to matrimonial properties, where a question of ownership arises between husband and wife, the court is allowed to determine "what was in the mind" at the time of the purchase and then rule accordingly. In some cases, the husband is deemed to keep the property under a constructive trust in favour of his wife.

219. Women are entitled by law to acquire, possess and own land in Belize with no discrimination.

220. Women have the right to choose the place where they live.

221. To conclude, women have legal equality with men in Belize.

Article 16

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

(a) The same right to enter into marriage;

(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;

(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

(h) The same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.

222. In Belize, as in other parts of the Caribbean, women and men form consensual unions rather than legal unions sanctioned by the law or church. Therefore, family relations are governed by a combination of civil laws, religion and customary practices.

223. According to the 1991 census, only 38.7 per cent of the population are married and 56 per cent have never been married (CSO, 1992).

224. A look at the ethnic background of that 38.7 per cent reveals that Mestizos have the highest rate of marriage (46.8 per cent of currently married females and 48.3 per cent of currently married males are Mestizos). Only 22 per cent of Creole women and men are married.

225. Marriage is valued mainly because it may provide economic rewards. According to McClaurin, men may use women's economic vulnerability as a way to extract sexual favours or as a strategy to develop consensual relations with women:

"These relationships, however, often exacerbate women's subordinate situation because, in exchange for some semblance of economic stability for herself and her family, a woman is often required to produce a child for the union. This act of reproduction, which men interpret as proof of a woman's commitment, thus becomes part of a system of economic exchange where women are unable to exert any real control over their own reproductive processes. Further, by adding another child to her family, the woman may be sowing the seeds of the relationship's end. Finally, in this cycle, if each subsequent consensual relationship requires that she produce a child, the woman finds herself with a larger family than she may have intended and which she is unable to support" (McClaurin, 1993).

226. In this sexual and economic context, women find themselves deprived of the right to choose a spouse. This results in psychological and social pressures for women, who more often than not are subjected to a contradictory social stigma.

227. To explain, then, marriage on other grounds, religion (Catholicism mainly), status and educational opportunities may influence the decision to enter into a legal union. By law, males and females have equal rights to marry at the age of 18 years (chap. 140, sect. 5, 3).

228. Marriage is defined by law as follows: "The voluntary union of one man with one woman to the exclusion of all others" (chap. 140).

229. There are no laws demanding a woman to take her husband's name. Women have the right to keep their own name when married.

230. The law prohibits marriage under the following circumstances: a woman to her father, son or brother (chap. 140, 3, 1), and between two persons, one of whom is under the age of 14 years.

231. The judicial districts into which Belize is divided are marriage districts. Registration of marriages and divorces are required by law. A license to marry needs to be presented at least five days before it is required. The certificate of marriage is issued by the Registrar General.

232. The legal consequences of the union of a man and woman, i.e., living as husband and wife, are:

(a) Entitlement to common name, domicile, nationality;

(b) Restriction on ability to give evidence against each other (except violence against each other);

(c) Special rules regarding certain crimes, such as conspiracy.

233. The laws of Belize include a Married Persons (Protection) Act (chap. 141). Specifically, married women may apply to a court of summary jurisdiction under all or any of the following provisions:

(a) That the applicant no longer be bound to cohabit with her husband, which provision while in force shall have the effect in all respects of a decree of judicial separation on the grounds of cruelty;

(b) That the legal custody of any children of the marriage between the applicant and her husband, while under the age of 16 years, be committed to the applicant;

(c) That the husband shall pay to the applicant personally, or for her use to any officer of the court, or to any other person on her behalf, such weekly sum not exceeding fifty dollars as the court, having regard to the means of both the husband and the wife, considers reasonable;

(d) That, where the legal custody of any children of the marriage has been committed to the applicant, the husband shall pay to the applicant, or to any officer of the court or other person on her behalf, such weekly sum not exceeding twenty dollars as the court, having regard to the means of both the husband and the wife, considers reasonable, for the maintenance of each child until the child attains the age of 16 years (chap. 141, 2).

234. Recent law changes recognize the widespread practice of common-law relations. The Illegitimate Persons Act changed the name for children born out of wedlock (chap. 137). This Act stipulates that a "single woman" (which includes a widow or a married woman who lives apart from her husband) (chap. 137, 2) can file an "affiliation order" in Family Court.

235. An affiliation order is "an order adjudging a man to be the putative father of an illegitimate child and ordering him to pay a sum of money weekly or otherwise" (sect. 2).

236. The Status of Children Ordinance (chap. 143 of the laws) removed the legal disabilities of children born out of wedlock to inherit their father's property provided that the paternity has been admitted or otherwise established. In this connection, a certified copy of an entry in the register of births that a certain person is the father of a child is prima facie evidence that the person named is the father of the child. The Supreme Court rules on cases when there are disputes.

237. According to chapter 136, the Family Maintenance Act imposes a legal duty on a married man to maintain not only his own children but also the following children:

(a) Every child, whether or not born in wedlock, which his wife may have living at the time of her marriage with him;

(b) If he cohabits with any woman, every child which such woman may have living at the time of the commencement of such cohabitation;

(c) Any child of his, so long as such children respectively are unable by reason of tender years or bodily or mental infirmity to maintain themselves.

238. Under the new Family Legislation Amendment Act, child allowance has been increased from BZ$ 20 to BZ$ 50 per week and the maintenance age limit has been raised from 14 to 16. In addition, the court has the discretion to renew the maintenance order even after the age of 16 years if the interests of the child so require, for example, for the continued education of the child.

239. The Act also increases the maximum allowance payable to a wife on "judicial separation" from BZ$ 50 to BZ$ 100 per week. In the absence of the husband or on his default, the Act requires the mother to look after the children under the age of 14 years or any children who by reason of bodily or mental infirmity are unable to maintain themselves respectively.

240. Both parents are the natural guardians of the children. The Act further amends the Infants Act (chap. 138) to give jurisdiction over infants to the Family Court.

241. Violence against women has been legally recognized as an area where women need protection. Factors acting against the economy of the household (e.g., low wages and high cost of living, unemployment, low level of skills) compound with processes of socialization that equate masculinity to violence.

242. The Domestic Violence Act has been in place since 1993 and its enforcement is the responsibility of the Family Court, instituted in 1989. In 1993, an examination of records on domestic violence cases which had proceeded to court revealed a total of 103 cases within the six-month period of May to November 1993 alone.

243. Since 1985, the organization Women against Violence has provided advocacy, legal protection and direct services. At present, DWA and WAV are designated to offer training and education to the police and the public on the provisions made by the Domestic Violence Act. A domestic violence manual was prepared by way of a PAHO-funded project and has been widely used since 1993. In 1992, WAV and the Belize City Council opened the Belize Shelter for Battered Women. However, it relies on external funding and does not keep pace with the level of need for such a service. In addition to legislation, the necessary mechanisms and budgetary allocations will be required to ensure enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act.

244. Owing to the enduring ideology that sees "domestic affairs" as belonging to the private domain, it is essential that all socialization means available (media, educational institutions) are also targeted to create awareness not only of police officers, but also of the society as a whole.

245. Despite a series of laws to safeguard women under 16 from sexual involvement, they remain at considerable risk. Carnal knowledge (chap. 84, sect. 46) imposes jail terms of varying lengths, from two years to life. Much more attention needs to be directed towards the enforcement of these laws, and to increasing public awareness of their provisions and of the young woman's rights.

246. On 30 May 1994, a new Criminal Justice Act entered into effect. Accordingly, any person found guilty on more than two occasions of the offence of rape, causing dangerous harm, maiming, or using deadly means to harm, will be sent to jail for life.

247. A marriage may be terminated only by the death of either party or by a divorce granted by a competent court of law.

248. Divorce is available on the same grounds for both men and women. Interestingly enough, the higher rate of divorce is among Creoles - 49.6 per cent for females and 46.5 per cent for males - compared to 21.7 per cent and 30.3 per cent respectively for Mestizos (CSO, 1992, p. 19). Legal Aid Services reported that men represent a higher number of clients owing to their desire to legitimize common-law unions.

249. In 1992, according to a report of the Chief Justice,[4] there were a total of 121 cases of divorce compared to 92 in 1991, of which 80 were heard compared to 106 in 1991. The Supreme Court of Judicature Act (chap. 82) indicates the grounds for divorce. Consequently, by way of a petition to the Supreme Court, the husband or wife can file a case against their spouse on one or more of the following grounds:

(a) That the respondent has, since the celebration of the marriage, committed adultery, or

(b) That the respondent has deserted the petitioner without cause for a period of at least three years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition, or

(c) That the respondent is incurably of unsound mind and has been continuously under care and treatment for a period of at least five years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition.

250. The wife can also file on the grounds that her husband has, since the time of the marriage, been guilty of rape, sodomy or bestiality.

251. The court will not entertain a divorce petition before the expiry of three years of marriage unless there are exceptional circumstances.

252. A woman must still prove that she has contributed monetarily or in similar fashion to the purchase of property in order to be awarded property in a divorce. This is a discretionary decision by the judge. Some may consider that work in the home counts as a contribution towards the value of the property, but given the disregard for household work as work of economic value, this is rarely the case.

253. The Widows' and Orphans' Pension Act is administered with a fund established by this Act (separated from the fund of general revenues of Belize) (112, 4).

254. The widow's pension shall be paid in respect of the entire period from the death of the deceased to the death of the widow (chap. 25, 7, 3). On the other hand, the annual rate of a widow's pension amounts to one half of the rate of the pension of the deceased contributor (chap. 25, 7, 4).

255. The rate of children's pension varies depending on whether a widow's pension is also being paid, as well as on the number of children due to benefit (chap. 231, 11).

256. However, the following stipulations prevent the granting of a widow's pension:

(a) If the widow was at the time of the death of the deceased cohabiting with a person other than the deceased;

(b) If after the death of the deceased the widow remarries or cohabits with any person and if, after the grant of a widow's pension, the widow

remarries or cohabits with any person, the pension shall cease as from the date of the remarriage or the commencement of the cohabitation (25, 7, 1);

(c) If the deceased's death occurs within 12 months of the marriage and there are no children born of the marriage; but the Government may, if it thinks fit, grant the pension if it is satisfied that there are compassionate grounds for the payment thereof (25, 7, 2).

257. The recent labour force census showed that 22 per cent of households are headed by women. Poverty can be linked to gender segmentation of the labour market that keeps women at the low wage, low skill end of the labour market even if they achieve higher levels of schooling, as well as to the lack of support systems that value reproduction and provide recognition to their needs.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

258. Families in Belize are characterized by different structures to which laws attempt to give equal recognition. Nuclear families are only one family type. Poverty and, especially, economic demands on households influence the extent to which adults are able to achieve security and access to services for themselves and their family members. Although both women and men are by law required to have the same responsibilities to protect their children, in practice, economic burdens, emigration and customs place the greater responsibilities on women. These three areas will need to be addressed by all segments of society in order to narrow gender gaps in family laws and practices.

259. While the present report has documented a high degree of compliance by the Government of Belize with the articles of the Convention, it has also highlighted a number of areas where reforms are necessary to meet more fully those obligations, as well as additional opportunities to better extend anti-discriminatory provisions in order to further promote gender equality. Areas requiring greater attention, and for which action has been foreshadowed, include sexual harassment, access to continuing education for young mothers, equal pay for work of equal value, and gender-neutral teaching materials.

260. It is also evident that, even in areas where adequate provisions exist, attention is required to ensure greater compliance, through more consistent enforcement of laws and regulations, as well as through public awareness campaigns and public education. This applies to such areas as fuller implementation of domestic violence legislation, improved access to health services, regulation of brothels, and sexual offences, including against minors.

261. In several areas of analysis, it was apparent that the existence of appropriate provisions has not necessarily produced the intended equitable outcomes. This attests to the entrenched systemic nature of much discriminatory and inequitable behaviour which serves to discriminate against women, so that it may be necessary to adopt more affirmative forms of action. Such interventions, including legislative, ought to be viewed as temporary measures pending such broader systemic change which achieves structural equity. In particular, women's continued highly inequitable access to key decision-making occupations and to financial independence may be priority areas for such action. At the

very least, it may now be necessary to consider the merit of equal employment and affirmative action legislation, as well as reforms to the provision of credit to women.

262. The submission of this initial report on Belize's compliance with its obligations as a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has provided a valuable period of analysis and reflection on the status of women in Belize, and has equally served to enable Belize to identify opportunities for priority action to further enhance the status of its women and, in particular, to act to eliminate all forms of gender discrimination.

Notes

[1] The Human Development Report provides measures of each country's human development indicators. The human development index is a composite of three indicators: life expectancy, education and income.

[2] Interview with Gladys Stewart, 25 July 1991 (in Macpherson, 1993).

[3] Belize Today, 1984, p. 57.

[4] Report of Sir George Brown, Chief Justice, Belize Times, 6 January 1993.

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Annex

TABLES RELATING TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN BELIZE*

(No entry or "n.a." against an item indicates that data were unavailable)

Table 1

Participation in parliamentary assembly

	Total	Number female	Percentage female	Number male	Percentage male
1980	26	2	7.7	24	92.3
1985	36	3	8.3	33	91.7
1994	38	4	10.5	34	89.5

Table 2

Senior management in Government

	Total	Number female	Percentage female	Number male	Percentage male
1980	n.a.				
1985	52	0	0	52	100.0
1994	67	15	22.4	52	77.6

Table 3

Participation in local government (City Council and Town Boards)

	Total	Number female	Percentage female	Number male	Percentage male
1980	51	n.a.			
1985	51	n.a.			
1994	58	8	13.8	50	86.2

* Extracted from Belize Report for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Ministry of Human Resources, Youth, Women and Culture, Social Planning Unit and Department of Women's Affairs, 1994).

Table 4

Participation in foreign affairs (ambassadors)

	Total	Number female	Percentage female	Number male	Percentage male
1980	(nil - pre-independence)				
1985	4	0	0	4	100.0
1994	6	1	16.7	5	83.3

Table 5

Participation as employers/own-account workers

	Total No.	Percentage female	Percentage of labour force (male and female)
1980	10 778	7.8	26.0 (self-employed)
1985	n.a.		
1991	16 124	25.0	26.5 (employers and self-employed)
1993	17 477	20.8	29.1 (own-account workers and employers)

Table 6

Participation in administrative/managerial positions

	Total	Number female	Percentage female	Number male	Percentage male
1980	n.a.				
1985	n.a.				
1991	4 911	1 671	33.9	3 240	66.1
1993	5 925	2 162	36.5	3 763	63.5
(Managerial/legislative and professional categories)					

Table 7

Participation in business establishments

	Total	Number female	Percentage female	Number male	Percentage male
1980	3 119	1 163	37.3	1 956	62.7
1985	n.a.				
1991	11 784	4 935	41.9	6 849	58.1
1993	14 387	6 696	46.5	7 691	53.5

(Wholesale/retail, hotel/restaurant, financial and real estate sectors)

Table 8

Mechanisms to promote the advancement of women: current (1994) status

National machinery	Department of Women's Affairs, plus the National Women's Commission: advisory committee to the Minister responsible for Women's Affairs
Percentage of national budget	0.10 per cent of recurrent budget (1994/95)
Gender training	Informal training courses and workshops
Focal points in technical ministries	Not applicable
No. of women's NGOs	Six (women's NGOs receive a total annual subvention of US$ 50,000)

Table 9

Poverty indicators

	1980		1991		1993	
	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage	No.
Percentage of female-headed households		n.a.		n.a.	21	n.a.
Unemployment (total):						
Percentage female	1.6	126	2.1	252	15.4	3 127
Percentage male	2.3	758	4.3	1 805	7.0	3 241
Unemployment (urban):						
Percentage female		n.a.	1.8	164	12.9	1 767
Percentage male		n.a.	5.9	1 089	8.7	1 801
Unemployment (rural):						
Percentage female		n.a.	2.7	88	20.4	1 359
Percentage male		n.a.	3.0	716	5.7	1 441
No. of day-care centres (urban)		n.a.		n.a.		n.a.
No. of day-care centres (rural)		n.a.		n.a.		n.a.
Income distribution		n.a.		n.a.		n.a.
Living in poverty: total No. (using World Bank threshold: US$ 370 pp/annum)			20.0	38 000 (estimate)		
Percentage in female-headed households			19.5 (estimate)			

Table 10

Access to productive resources (1993)

Percentage bank loans to women	No data available
Percentage of rural properties registered to women	No data available
Percentage of urban properties registered to women	No data available
Total No. registered	No data available

Table 11

Access to education

	1980			1985			1993			
	Percentage female	Percentage male	Total	Percentage female	Percentage male	Total	Percentage female	Percentage male	Total	
Literacy	74.2	74.3	74.7				70.3	70.3	70.3	(1990)
Primary enrolment									93.0	
						39 212			50 799	
Primary graduation			72.7						57.8	(1990)
			3 212			3 676			4 879	
Secondary enrolment			n.a.			n.a.			9 637	
Secondary graduation							901	587	1 488	
Tertiary enrolment	1.9	2.2					0.9	1.6		(1991)
Tertiary graduation										
Technical enrolment										
Technical graduation										
Continuing ed graduation										
Adult ed. graduation										

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Table 12

Access to health

	1980		1985		1993	
	Percentage female	Total	Percentage female	Total	Percentage female	Total
Immunization rate						97
Malnutrition (percentage)		32		27		46
Anaemia	80.0	40	60.0	25	68.4	307
Use of substances						
Mental illness	74.1	27	52.6	19	63.0	119
HIV cases (1/1/86-30/4/94)		–		–	35.7	291
AIDS		–		–	30.5	82
Use of contraception (15-44 years) (percentage)					33.5	(1991)
Sterilization (tubal ligation)					12.3	(1991)
Life expectancy (years)	69.4	68.5		n.a.	74.1	71.9 (1991)
Females only						
Cervical cancer		4		4		16
Abortions (as percentage of live births)	9.8	590 (1983)	12.5	760	16.2	990 (1991)
Total birth rate (per 1,000)	43.1		35.6		32.2	(1991)
Total fertility rate					4.5	(1991)
Maternal mortality rate (per 10,000) (Dr. Francis Smith study)	4.4	(1979)			13.1	(1989)
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)		30.2		23.4		28.4 (1992)
Child (under-5) mortality rate (per 1,000)					1.3	(1992)
Breastfeeding (to 4 months)					44	(1992)
Pregnant women immunized for tetanus (percentage)					95	(1992)

Table 13

Access to employment

	1980		1991		1993	
	Percentage female	Total	Percentage female	Total	Percentage female	Total
Primary sector	5.2	14 880	13.9	21 202	13.1	18 035
Percentage females in this sector in domestic jobs	n.a.		79.1		66.4	
Secondary sector	19.4	5 903	20.4	10 010	19.3	10 628
Tertiary sector	34.2	17 450	38.4	26 749	40.7	31 165
Part-time employment (<40 hrs/wk)		n.a.		n.a.	39.2	15 611
Informal sector		n.a.		n.a.		n.a.
Export sector		n.a.		n.a.		n.a.

Table 14

Violence against women

		1980	1985	1993
Specific measures taken				
Legal	1993: Domestic Violence Act proclaimed			
National plans	1991: National Policy Statement on Women			
Training	largely informal training by DWA and NGOs			
Protective measures taken				
No. of public shelters		0	0	1
Other services	1985: Women against Violence, Belize established			
	1989: Family Court established			
Professionals				
Judiciary:	No. female			6
Police:	No. female	9	12	60
	Percentage of total	1.9	2.8	9.0

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Table 15

Effects of armed and other conflicts

	1980	1985	1994
Size of military			
Percentage female	21	20	36
No. recognized refugees			8 912
Percentage of total population			4.5
Total No. refugee/displaced/undocumented persons			28 500
Percentage of total population			14.0

	1981	1985	1990
No. emigrants	211	315	400
Percentage female	54.0	52.7	52.0
No. immigrants	1 281	1 478	2 891
Percentage female	47.5	47.0	44.5

Table 16

Legislative status of women: current (1994)

Equal rights	No legislation, but embraced in Constitution.
Equal pay	Being considered for drafting.
Sexual harassment	Bill currently before Cabinet.
Domestic violence	Domestic Violence Act passed in 1992.
Sexual offences	No specific legislation (generally covered in Criminal Code)
Inheritance	No legislation drafted.
Citizenship	No legislation, but covered in Constitution.
Maintenance	Revised in 1994.
Maternity leave	Included in Labour Laws and Public Service General Orders.
Equal opportunities in employment	No legislation drafted.
Ratification of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Belize ratified in 1990.

Table 17

Women and population

	1970		1980		1991	
	Percentage female	Total	Percentage female	Total	Percentage female	Total
Population						
Total	49.9	119 934	49.4	145 353	49.5	194 000
Percentage increase			19.9	21.1	33.8	33.5
Urban	52.1	64 025	51.3	76 277	51.2	90 374
Percentage increase			15.6	17.3	18.1	18.5
Rural	47.3	54 909	51.1	69 076	48.0	103 626
Percentage increase			25.5	25.8	52.7	50.0
Age dependency ratio		1.16		1.03		0.93
Population doubling rate						